High cost of newsprint

267. SHRI A. VIJAYARAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the cost of newsprint in the country has gone very high in the last one year;

(b) if so, whether Government is considering increasing production of the newsprint in Government-run newsprint factories; and

(c) whether Government is aware of the fact that small scale newspapers and publications are on the verge of closing due to high price in newsprint?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL POLICY AND PROMOTION, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR): (a) to (c) The cost of Newsprint has shown a fluctuating trend during the last one year. The cost of the newsprint in December, 2007 was Rs.31,000/- per ton which increased to Rs.44,000/- per ton in May, 2008 and decreased to Rs.38,000/- per ton in December, 2008 (Source: CMIE). Expansion-cum-diversification projects to augment the capacity of Government run M/s. Hindustan Newsprint Limited, a subsidiary of M/s. Hindustan Paper Corporation Limited, with swing facility to produce Newsprint or Writing Paper depending upon the remunerative sales realization and demand is under implementation. Further, the Government have waived Customs Duty on import of newsprint to reduce the cost and to help the print industry.

Impact of Gorkhaland agitation on Darjeeling tea industry

268. SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Darjeeling tea and tourism industries are facing a huge revenue loss on account of the ongoing Gorkhaland agitation; and

(b) if so, the details of steps taken Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) The industry in Darjeeling has been affected on account of the ongoing Gorkhaland agitation. The Government of India is having regular deliberations on the issue with the State Government duty keeping in view the security/law and order related implications.

Meeting shortage of army officers

269. SHRI MAHENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the shortage of army officers has emerged as a stumbling block to the speedy setting up of four regional National Security Guard (NSG) hubs in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government has taken any effective steps to meet the shortage of army officers in the country so that the new NSG hubs are operationalized within the time bound period; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI SRIPRAKASH JAISWAL): (a) to (d) While it is true that there is a shortage of officers, in overall terms, in the Indian Army, it is expected that this will not be a stumbling block in the creation of proposed regional hubs of the NSG.

According to information provided by the Ministry of Defence, a number of measures have been taken to address the issue of shortage of officers in the Army. These, *inter-alia*, include improvement in the service conditions, including pay structure, increase in the intake of Short Service Commissioned (SSC) officers and improvement in their service conditions, increase in the quota of promotion from PBORs to the officer level, augmentation of the selection and training infrastructure, and publicity and awareness campaigns with a view to attracting talented youth to join the Defence Forces.

Shortfalls in equipments and ammunition with Indian Army

270. DR. JANARDHAN WAGHMARE:
PROF. ALKA BALRAM KSHATRIYA:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether as per CAG report there are huge gaps between Army acquisition plans and what it finally procured;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether due to shortage of equipments and ammunition, the Army is not ready to face war etc.;

(d) if so, whether in view of shortfalls in equipments and ammunition with the Army, the Government propose to take any corrective steps; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) and (b) C and AG's Report No. 4 of 2007 pertaining to the Performance Audit of Defence Capital Acquisition has made certain observations regarding achievement of targets in Army's capital acquisition plans during the previous plan periods. However, the report has also noted the view that after setting up of a separate organization for capital acquisition within the Ministry, the compliance with the Army Plan targets is improving.

(c) to (e) The Indian Army is fully prepared to face any eventuality. Requirement of equipment and ammunition is reviewed regularly and action is taken on a continuous basis to induct necessary equipment and ammunition.